

## **IDAHO STATE JOURNAL**

### **Irrigation company donates pivot system to high school**

By Debbie Bryce - Journal Writer

AMERICAN FALLS - American Falls High School now has a learning land laboratory, thanks to a donation by a local irrigation company. Next: A potato crop.

Knudsen Irrigation in Aberdeen donated a Valley pivot system valued at \$22,000 to the school's Agricultural Education Program.

Manager Chuck Buchta said the irrigation system will allow students to gain hands-on experience working with the state-of-the-art computerized Valley pivot.

"This is kind of a first for us," he said. "We thought it would do well to promote Valley."

Valley systems are the leading distributor of irrigation equipment in the Northwest, Buchta said.

In a news release, Agricultural Educational Instructor Marc Beitia said the learning land lab has long been a goal of the school.

"Dreams come true when people work together for a common cause," he said.

Ten acres adjacent to the school were left vacant after its completion in 2001.

Student Tanner Funk is currently growing spring wheat at the land laboratory and next year, he and fellow students will produce their first potato crop thanks to the new irrigation system.

While Beitia said students didn't mind the extra work involved with the old hand lines, the new system will conserve water and decrease labor needs at the school farm by as much as 75 percent.

The high-tech system allows growers to use less water to irrigate more acres. The new system will enhance productivity of water intensive crops such as potatoes.

A series of precise computerized nozzles uses a low-pressure spray, saving energy and water. Because less water is pumped, costs are greatly reduced, Buchta said.

The project got under way in June. Laser measurements were taken and several community businesses donated time and equipment to complete installation of the irrigation system.

Pocatello Ready Mix donated concrete for the pivot pad, Ramsey Electric donated labor to wire the 480-volt, three-phase power supply, G & L Metal Fab provided welding for the pivot, and former American Falls agricultural students donated their time to build a fence around the new pivot pad.

Beitia said the new system will be a teaching tool and profits from future crops will help to establish a scholarship for students seeking a career in agriculture.

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